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## Viewing cable 06KUWAIT3877, MINISTER OF ISLAMIC AFFAIRS ON FOSTERING MODERATION

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06KUWAIT3877**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06KUWAIT3877</a>	<a href="#">2006-09-28 06:39</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Kuwait</a>

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SUBJECT: MINISTER OF ISLAMIC AFFAIRS ON FOSTERING MODERATION

REF: A. KUWAIT 3650

[1](#)B. KUWAIT 1741

[1](#)C. KUWAIT 882

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary: The Ambassador called on Dr. Abdullah Al-Maatouq, who serves as both Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (MAIA), on September [1](#)27. They discussed the MAIA's upcoming Moderation conference in Washington, which the Minister said had been in some jeopardy of cancellation because of the Pope's recent comments, but that the Amir had insisted it go forward. He noted that the previous moderation conference, held in Britain earlier this year, had led to Kuwait's redoubling its efforts to spread moderation since European Imams were susceptible to falling into extremism. He said Kuwait's moderation stemmed from dialogue within the society as well as openness to the outside world. A more pressing worry for him is sectarianism. The Minister agreed with the Ambassador's criticism of the misrepresentation of the war on terror by some commentators as a war on Islam and hoped the Ministry could help convey this point to the public. End Summary.

Amir Insists on Holding Conference Despite Pope's Remarks  
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[1](#)2. (C/NF) The Ambassador called on Dr. Abdullah Al-Maatouq, who serves as both Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, on September 27. Al-Maatouq began by thanking the U.S. for its recognition of Kuwait as a free country, presumably in response to the recently released International Religious Freedom Report. The Minister then mentioned the upcoming MAIA conference in Washington. He said that the recent comments by the Pope had threatened to derail the conference, but that meetings with foreign ambassadors and the Amir's insistence that the conference continue as planned had saved the conference.

UK Conference Reveals Imams' Need for Moderation Training  
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[1](#)3. (C/NF) Al-Maatouq said the British government had called the MAIA's recent conference in London one of the most successful conferences ever in the UK in terms of the topics discussed and the participants involved. The conference recommended improving training of Imams in Europe on moderation, since many tend toward extremism. The Minister said the conference convinced him to increase the budget "ten-fold" in order to train Imams both in Kuwait and Europe. Included was funding for an Islamic center in Manchester for training of Imams. Al-Maatouq commented that the conference was an experiment, but declared that it had been an enormous success.

Washington Conference Will Be Closed  
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[1](#)4. (C/NF) In response to the Ambassador's question on whether the Washington conference would be open to the public, Al-Maatouq said that it would be patterned as a consultation with American Muslim leaders, but that another conference in Britain, to be held under the patronage of Prince Charles in February 2007, would focus on interfaith

dialogue and include Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

#### Moderation is Rooted in Openness and True Islam

15. (C/NF) Al-Maatouq insisted that part of the key to moderation is teaching true Islam. He noted that none of the prominent Al-Qaeda leaders was trained in Islamic studies. For instance, Osama Bin Laden is a university graduate and Ayman Al-Zawahiri is a doctor. He cited a study by an Egyptian writer who interviewed 3,000 terrorists in Egypt, and found that only one was a graduate of Al-Azhar (Egypt's foremost Islamic University).

16. (C/NF) The Ambassador inquired about the tension between moderation and extremism in Kuwait over the past 20 years. Al-Maatouq said Kuwait was a very moderate society and that its diwanis have allowed people to talk to one another and reach mutual understanding. He acknowledged that there were a few extremists but that they had not come to extremism through the mosques. The Ministry had been successful in inculcating moderation among potentially extremist Imams through training courses and trips to Europe. The trips to Europe are part of Al-Maatouq's view that isolation breeds extremism. He cited Saudi Arabia as an example of a society

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that mistrusted everything from the outside and therefore bred extremists. The Ministry's training programs were developed in consultation with reformed extremists in order to understand how to reach other extremists (ref B). The Ministry has used these experiences to develop a strategy (ref C), which he said was approved by the OIC and distributed to other Islamic Affairs Ministries. Al-Maatouq said that even Saudi Arabia, which had initially been resistant to Kuwait's moderation project, jumped on board when King Abdullah called for moderation at the most recent OIC meeting.

#### Sectarianism More of a Threat than Extremism

17. (C/NF) Al-Maatouq declared that Kuwait's extremists were not a major concern. He expressed greater worry over sectarian divisions and specifically mentioned the Shi'a and the Salafis.

#### Minister Advises Cooperation in USG Public Diplomacy

18. (C/NF) The Ambassador lamented Kuwaiti and other regional writers' increasing conflation of the war on terror with a war on Islam. Al-Maatouq vociferously rejected that idea, saying "there is no war on Islam" and expressing support for American efforts to rid Afghanistan and Iraq of unwanted elements. He commented that Kuwaiti writers are pandering to the public rather than leading it, and that he hoped his Ministry's programs would train writers to comment more intelligently on the war on terror. The Minister also advised the USG to route its rebuttals through the GOK, since recent events in Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, Afghanistan, and Iraq have made Kuwaitis wary of U.S. intentions. The Ambassador also noted successful visits to the U.S. by Kuwaiti imams, who experienced the full range of religious practice in the U.S. and came back with completely different attitudes toward the U.S. The Ambassador told the Minister that we would like to work with his ministry to expand such programs.

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LeBaron